DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 215 391 EA 014 369

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TITLE The School Age Criminal.
PUB DATE 12 Apr 81
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National School Boards Association (41st, Dallas, TX, April 11-14, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Children; Classification; *Criminals; *Delinquency; Drug Abuse; Elementary Secondary Education; *Individual Characteristics; Stealing; Violence
IDENTIFIERS *School Age Criminals

ABSTRACT

School age crime has increased a great deal in recent decades and a review of types of school age criminals may help school officials develop policies and programs to handle the problem. Both increased crime and improved news coverage have made the general public more concerned about school crime and school age criminals. A comparison of crime statistics from 1964 and 1977 shows that the number of school age criminals and the amount of crime by school age children has grown. School age criminals commit more crimes against property than against persons but the latter type of crime has multiplied faster in the 1964-1977 period. There are seven types of school age criminals, including the incidental, habitual, psychotic, and sado-masochistic criminal, the necrophilous or death-worshiping criminal, the agressive sex offender, and the child who commits substance-induced agression. These substances, such as alcohol, amphetamines, heroin, LSD, "angel dust" or PCP, barbiturates, or even drug placebos, may interact with certain personality types to produce violent behavior. Educational officials should take appropriate action to handle the problem of school age criminals. (Author/RW)

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THE SCHOOL AGE CRIMINAL

by
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Paper presented Sunday, April 12, 1981,
National School Boards Convention
Dallas, Texas

EA 014 369

Historically, school crime or more accurately, crime that occurs within the confines of the school has not held the attention of criminologists. This is not because of a lack of interest but rather represents the viewpoint of Criminology as a science that examines crime as an act of human behavior not related to a given environment. School crime is to the Criminologist a fictional concept. The acts described are factual but to label those acts and suggest they are uniquely related to school is an error. As James Q. Wilson (Wilson, 1975) has pointed out, "It no more deserves to be called school crime than ordinary crime deserves to be called family crime because families are so often involved in it."

Criminal behaviors are defined by various state and federal statistics. The statute determines the specific conditions under which a given behaviors are defined by various state and federal statutes. The statute determines the specific conditions under which a given behavior is defined as criminal or not. Homicide is legal under certain conditions, it is excusable under other conditions and it is murder under still other conditions.

School crime is crime. It does not differ from crime in other environments. An act of extortion is a felony be it occur in a bank or on the playground. In trying to understand crime that occurs in school the initial step is to recognize we are talking about general crime. Not some new hybrid born in the nuclear age.

The American Criminal Attitude

The history of America is a violent history. We are a brawling nation that has built its greatness not by cooperation and concilliation but by confrontation and conquest. Our heritage is a people that have done what couldn't be done. We

built a transcontinental railroad where none could be built. We defy the known facts and create medical marvels that stagger the imagination. Our greatness is not without doubt, however. Our leaders have been both saint and sinner. The railroad, steel, oil, banking and the copper kings were simultaneously men of vision and men all too willing to engage in criminal behavior. Our nations greatest crime fighter relentlessly fought organized crime and at the same time willingly violated the civil rights of selected Americans. Crime is and has been present in our lives. Like a sore toe we have learned to live with it. We expect to be cursed with a manageable degree of criminal behavior in all aspects of our lives. Theft, vandalism, assault, extortion, threat and murder are part of American life and American education.

Public Concern Over Crime in Schools

Why the tremendous public concern with crime in schools? Is it really the same old song made popular by our increased awareness through media exposure or has there been a change within the American criminal population? The answer is yes on both accounts.

Media Impact on Awareness

There is little or no argument that the average American is today more informed of worldwide behavior than he was in 1970. Daily we witness war, conflict in countries too far and too small to remember. No one is immune. If the conditions are right, such as a slow news day, a simple street fight in Miami could be observed on the six o'clock news in Seattle. While that doesn't often happen certain news worthy events are routinely exposed to the national news. Schools and crime are news worthy events. If that fight were between a teacher and a student during school hours it can get regional or national coverage. Thus the level of awareness

of criminal behavior is significantly higher in 1981 than ever before. Awareness breeds vigalence and contributes to fear. Americans are fearful that what is seen on the news may happen in their schools.

The Changing Criminal

A shift has occured within that portion of the population that earns the designation criminal. The criminal of the 1940's was a male in his adult years. He was primarily a property thief. Convicts followed an honor system. They didn't want to physically hurt their victims. Youth gangs also followed a code of behavior. Theft was a way to earn money to purchase a desired identity. The schools were omitted from criminal life. They were avoided as targets for criminal activities and were for the most part islands of safety from criminal behavior.

The late sixties and early seventies witnessed a rapid change in American life. The average American changed his life style more than ever before in our history. As a populace we questioned long held assumptions. We found we could publically disobey our codes if we acted as a member of a large group. The changes we experienced were not restricted to the normally law abiding person. The criminal element of society also changed. Honor among thieves, codes of acceptable behavior were abandoned. In the words of a long term thief, "these kids have no class. They just want to hurt people".

The die was cast. Today nearly one half of all crime is committed by school age children. Their average age is 15. They specialize in the property crimes of theft, burglary and automobile theft. When they commit crimes against persons it is almost always assault. Murder and rape are not crimes of school age children being reserved for the late teens and twenties.

In 1964 arrest rates for violent offenses per 100,000 population for murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault were 1.5, 5.8, 52.3 and 50.7 respectively. For property crimes the rates of arrest per 100,000 population were theft, 1147, burglary, 535, and automobile theft, 286. By contrast in 1977 the violent crime rates had risen to 2.4, 11.3, 104.4, and 94.4. Property was up to 1556.7, 786.9 and 215.5. Clearly, crime and criminals had entered the nations public schools.

Criminal Activity of School Age Children

1964 - 1977 per 100,000 population

	Violent Crimes Against Persons				Property Crimes		
	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Theft	Burglary	Vehicle Theft
1964	1.5	5.8	52.3	50.7	1147	535	286
1977	2.4	11.3	104.4	94.4	1556	786.9	215.5
increase/ decrease	.9	5.5	52.1	43.7	409	251.9	71

In comparing the data, we see that property crimes dramatically influence the statistical rates. School age criminals prefer the property offense over the person offense. However, we must not be complacent and overlook the increase in personal violence crimes. The finding of the National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention contain this sobering statement, "Comparison of arrest rates for the three major age groups from 1969 to the present suggests that the violent crimes of murder and forcible rape are the province of the young adult. However, there are indications that the proportion of juveniles to other age groups arrested for crimes of aggravated assault and robbery are increasing, thus suggesting that these crimes are increasingly becoming the province of youth." (1980).

If we ask what proportion of all crime is committed by juveniles and how do their rates compare with their proportion of the general population, we find that school age children represented about 19% of the general U.S. population in 1977. They accounted for 53% of arrests for motor vehicle theft, 51% of burglary arrests, 42% of larceny-theft arrests, 33% of robbery arrests, 17% of rape arrests, 16% of aggravated assault arrests and 9% of murder arrests. Proportionately they exceed themselves in property crimes and robbery. They equaled their proportion in rape, are slightly below in assault and equal about one-half their proportional share in murder. (IBID pg. 93)

What all of us have suspected is true. School age youth were significantly more criminal in 1974 than 1964. Their criminal behavior has shifted from property crimes toward person crimes. In all categories of crime except murder they nearly equal or more than double their share of proportional crime. With murder they have reached one-half their share. Crime and criminals are in the classroom.

As school officials attempt to struggle with the increase in crime, and those individuals that are both student and criminal, it is useful to look at the individual and see if any identifying information exists. This data is essential in developing policy and programs that will be effective.

The School Age Criminal

The school age criminal is both similar and different from his adult counterpart. His actions are the same in that he commits a specific act but in some cases his motivation and his psychology is unique to his age category. For purposes of discussion the school age criminal will be examined under seven descriptors.

I. The incidental criminal - A psychologically normal individual who commits a single act that results in threat or injury to a person or damage to property. Impulsive intent is the motivation. No treatment

is required beyond usual statutory or local policy. Recidivism is not a concern.

II. Habitual Criminal - A psychologically normal individual who commits a series of acts that result in threat or injury to a person or damage to property. A distinct profile of erroneous thinking (Samenous and Yockelson, 1976) dominate this individual. He chooses criminal behavior from an early age and may commit thousands of individual crimes between the ages of five and twenty. His recidivism is predictable and few treatment programs are successful. He is often labeled as a criminal psychopath although he is not mentally ill. Some of his common errors of thinking are:

1. Seeks excitement and activity. Rejects contemplation. His thoughts are rapid, colorful and impatient. He must be continually active.
2. The fear of injury or death. He lives every day as his last. He is so fearful of losing his life he behaves as if every day was his last.
3. Fear of a put down. The fear of public failure and ridicule is universal among criminals. A zero person or no-count is the worst state for manhood. The criminal is hypersensitive to all others and routinely distorts his perceptions. To be told what to do is a put down, to ask questions shows ignorance, to receive help is weakness, etc. All are put downs.
4. Zero state is a nothing state. It does not relate possession of goods, it is being worth nothing - a no count, no more hopeless, worthless state exists. When the criminal is in this

state, he is blazing with anger, usually not expressed, but never the less it motivates his behavior.

5. Thoughts of anger. Although not always evident the criminal is chronically angry. His anger is more dangerous than that of a non criminal. The criminal "metastasizes". That is, he begins with an isolated incident, but spreads and spreads until he has lost all perspective. Boredom creates anger and much of the every day life in school is boring. The criminal is crystalized into action. He gets something going. His chronic anger fuels the fire.

6. Pride, the need for power, sentimentality, sex and concrete thinking are just a few of the cardinal errors in thinking that mark the habitual criminal.

III. Psychotic criminal - The psychotic youth may react to functional or learned delusions and hallucinations or to organic damage to the nervous system. In both instances the behavior is bizarre and easily identified. The functionally impaired youth presents a problem for the schools. His bizarre behavior differs from the functionally impaired adult. He is most often quiet, withdrawn, constricted rather than the expected adult pattern of boistrous, verbal and assaultive behavior.

IV. Sado-Masochistic criminal - The sado-masochistic pattern concentrates on pain and injury for self gratification. The sadist seeks to hurt others (humans and animals) so he may experience pleasure. Pleasure that ranges from mild fun to orgastic release. The chronic bully is most common but children who torture animals or torment younger and

weaker school mates are easily found in schools. The masochist also seeks pleasure but he gains his reward by causing someone to punish him. Flogging, self mutilation and the unsuccessful dare devil are examples. It must be remembered that sadists and masochists use others for their own gratification. They seek to use not kill their victims.

V. Necrophilous character - The extreme in potential violence is the necrophilous character as described by Fromm (1973).He seeks the death of another for his own gratification. Death is his theme. Controlled, a lover of organization and detail, mechanically and precisely he goes about a worship of death. Let me quote from a creed of a necrophilious youth. "Perfection is the elimination of all existence. You must go beyond the knowledge of existence to attain perfection. Death is perfection. The ultimate perfection is death." Fortunately, the necrophilous character does not act out his love of death to a great extent. He more often is the chronic hater. He seeks to psychologically destroy others. He seeks to destroy through hate, violence and death.

VI. Substance Induced Aggression - Using the work of Robert Powers and Irwin Kutash (1978), the topic of violence and substance abuse can be simplified by first describing the drug and then the personality type that is most likely to react violently to use of the drug.

1. Alcohol is involved in violence more so than any other drug (Goldstein, 1975). Symptoms are swearing, fighting, destruction of property and crimes. Wolfgang (1958) found that alcohol use was present in 54 percent of criminal

offenders and 53 percent of victims of crime in Philadelphia. Individuals with aggressive personalities who are impulsive are especially prone to extreme violence. Children who build up resentments explode under the influence of alcohol.

2. Amphetamines have long been associated with the counter action of fatigue. Post world war two open market sales by major pharmaceutical houses prompted wide spread use of the drug. In the late 1960's it became fashionable to "speed" or "trip out on speed." An increase in reported episodes of "toxic paranoid psychoses" occured. This syndrome contains extreme violence mixed with heightened suspiciousness.

   Under the influence of amphetamines children with personalities marked by aggressive tendencies and problems with impulse control are most subject to extreme violence. During the rush and run phases, hostility, aggressiveness, and paranoid thoughts are manifest. The crash phase ends a run with physical exhaustion. After the crash and during his return to health the speed freak may become highly irritable and violence is the usual response. With extreme dosage or long runs a hyperactive state called "reaching out" is achieved. (Carey and Mandel, 1968). Its described as, "They just can't keep from doing things and they're jumping around all the time. If they've got something in their hand they'll hit you without realizing what they're doing.

3. Heroin Contrary to common belief the heroin user is not violent. A specific heroin personality has not been identified and any violence involved is that which stems from participation in the drug trade.

4. Lysergic Acid Diethylamide - LSD Prior to the popularity of LSD in the mid 1960's more than 5,000 persons had been given LSD on 25,000 occasions (Cohen and Ditman, 1965) with little experience of aggression or violence.With the widespread use by youth without medical supervision individuals with aggressive character traits, paranoid tendencies and poor impulse control experienced episodes of violence while under LSD. Low dosage of .5 mg seem to produce hallucinatory response while dosage levels of 75 milligrams produce adverse reactions.

5. LSD and Amphetamines are especially dangerous together. Users experience a "death trip" where the effects of the LSD are heightened by the amphetamine. Muscle spasms and gross physical aggitation are part of the experience. Violent behavior is expected.

6. LSD and Alcohol brings together a release of inhibitions and the hallucinatory experience. Bizarre physical violence can occur.

7. Angel dust or PCP is enjoying current popularity and violence is a common report when the user has poor impulse control and an aggressive personality.

8. Narcotics as a group do not produce violent behavior.

9. Multiple drug use is common among the abusers of drugs. Like the gourmet cook the drug user has his secret mix that gives him his desired high. Certain combinations are especially dangerous and usually avoided by street-wise users. Youth, more inquisitive, impulsive and curious often make a fatal experiment by mixing the wrong ingredient.

10. Barbiturates and Alcohol do not produce violence but the combination slows vital body functions and death may occur.

11. Drug Placebo - rumored drugs or natural plants that are believed to yield highs or mellow properties are often involved in bizarre behavior. The power of suggestion can be a motivator of violence in the impulsive, immature individual.

VII. Aggressive Sex Offender - The majority of sex offenders are males between 13 and 30. The pedophileac, the rapist, the sexual psychopath and the hyperaggressive criminal who uses sexual assault as his vehicle of aggression are usually not associated with the school except when their victims are school age children. Cases of male homosexuals operating within youth groups are infrequent but do occur. When school age youth are involved in sex crimes as the offender they are usually the result of the fearful expression of growing sexual interest. While the act of sexual assault is certainly violent, homicide is most often a fear response to cover up and protect the offender.

School Response

The school is given two responsibilities by the local citizen. (1) to educate their children and (2) to protect those children from harm. In view of the increasing rate and change in type of violent crime, school boards and school administrators must reassess their historical position on response to crime. We can no longer afford to assume that crime and criminals are adults who live "out there". Criminals are attending our schools and local authorities must recognize this fact and take appropriate actions.

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